



The Ripline

www.bris.ac.uk/depts/union/BUHABS

Issue 1 2002/2003

Newsletter of the BRISTOL UNIVERSITY HOT AIR BALLOONING SOCIETY

Welcome to the Ripline; we know that after the excitement of coming to University, meeting new people and leaving your happy family home, then a Ballooning newsletter probably doesn't seem to be the most exciting thing in the world, but please read on. This issue contains the only two things you need to know about ballooning before you come out with us - how to sign-up, and what to bring with you! You should keep this Ripline (or at least the pull-out section) safe and use it for reference throughout the year.

For existing members this issue is probably more a reminder, but please note that we've improved the sign-up drill to take account of the mobile 'phone revolution, so you can -if you want- ring us at a specific time rather than come and see us at the pub. We're also giving all members a flying logbook to record flights and document crewing experience. Please read on for the details.

Well done to Paul Spellward, who has come 19th out of 99 in the Ballooning World Championships in France. New members will soon get to know Paul as our Senior Pilot.

Finally, please do tell us if you move house, or your Ripline may go missing in the complex web which is Bristol student housing!

Ellie Fearon and Hugo Williams

Presidential Welcome

Welcome to BUHABS, probably the best Ballooning society in the world! For 16 years, BUHABS has been flying students from Bristol University, and the University of the West of England, around the skies of the South West. We are on our fifth balloon, have trained over 15 pilots, fly every "slot" we can and go out drinking regularly!

Flying with BUHABS is amazingly cheap compared to any other form of flying. Our membership fee is higher than most student societies, but you'll understand why when you're floating 1000ft over Bristol on a beautiful clear morning!

If you only want to fly once or twice that's fine, we hope you enjoy your experience. One of the great things about University clubs is that you get out 10 times the amount you put in. BUHABS is no exception, and we encourage people to get involved in the running of the club as early as possible; we will be looking to recruit people to the BUHABS committee very soon. We hope to run a scheme this year to allow some of you to gain a British Balloons and Airships Club Crew qualification. Don't be scared to get involved in these opportunities, even if you're just joining as a first year. To get the best out of BUHABS come and meet up with us at the first socials, come out flying and crewing with us and have lots of fun.

By this time next year you could have been to Vermenton in France, flown at the Bristol International Balloon Fiesta with 100 other balloons or could even be training to be a balloon pilot yourself! Hope to see you at the first social (read on.....)

Hugo Williams

Socials!

Meet the committee drinks

Wednesday October 9th, 8pm outside the Union.

Come and meet the committee and each other. It's a great way to meet people with a common interest and get to know us. We'll also have the weather forecast for the following weekends flying, and some sign-up tips!

Indoor ballooning and slideshow.

Thursday November 14th, 8pm in the Anson room.

We hope that most people will have been out ballooning before this night, but for those who've haven't managed to fly, this is the perfect opportunity to come and see our lovely balloon! For everyone else it's a great opportunity to come and have a few drinks with us, see some pretty ballooning slides, ask us questions and find out about ballooning! Your friends are welcome too!

Check Out Day Sale

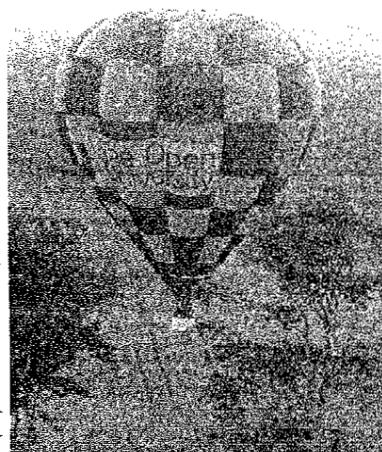
At long last after far far too long the opportunity came for me to 'check out' as a pilot. I started training in 1999 and was doing well by summer 2000. Then the weather turned for the winter and foot and mouth appeared in February 2001. I was recommended for a flight test in December 2001 but a second awful winter followed. After a few practice flights this summer (and retaking my 5 pilot exams which had expired) I was ready to take the plunge.

When an examiner was finally found (they're never around when you need them!) the planning began. The faithful MET service assured fair winds for Friday evening and Dave had agreed to drive with Tim. I took Rachel and Ingrid along as passengers for the ride and of course my examiner Crispin. Winds were predicted to come from the South and so a launch site in Bath was chosen. Fortunately this direction took us out into open countryside with fewer sensitive areas. I discussed the weather with Crispin and showed him where I thought we would go on the map. I also showed him my loading calculation, which showed we could comfortably fly with 4 people.

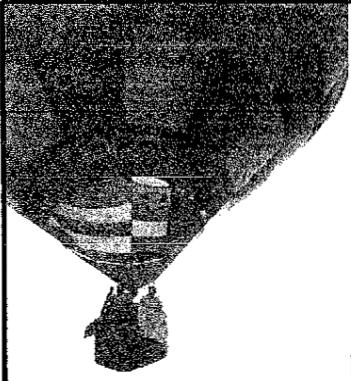
The balloon was rigged, with the help of an experienced crew making things easier. I was still responsible for the final checks though and made sure that every karabiner was shut and every rope was untangled. The crew briefings were made so that everyone knew what to do and we were ready for the off.

The balloon inflated nicely and the pre-flight checks completed. We took off a bit quicker than I had hoped and made a steady ascent over the city of Bath. I had time to settle the nerves and establish where we were going on the map.

As part of the test I had to do several practice approaches some high and some low and using the ripline to come down. This lets hot air out of the top of the balloon. The first opportunity to approach was to be onto one of two sports pitches at the top of a ridge but unfortunately we flew right between the two of them and over a house! The next chance came to descend fairly steeply into a valley and fly a low-level approach over a ploughed field. We popped out of the valley and flew across Charmy Down, a disused airfield. There was a microlight flying too and he seemed to be practising approaches just like us. A sensitive livestock area was fast approaching and we flew high to avoid it – an excellent opportunity for a fuel change.



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Flying with BUHABS



A guide to how to sign-up for flights, what to bring with you when you come flying and frequently asked questions.

How to sign-up for flights

- Existing members please note the **new sign up procedure**. You sign up for flights on the Thursday before the weekend you want to fly. We will send an e-mail round by Thursday morning, to let you know what slots are being offered, and who will be in the White Bear Pub on Thursday lunchtime.
- Between about 1.10pm and 1.50pm (i.e. lunchtime) you can come and say Hi to us in the pub and can sign up there. THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO SIGN UP because you can quiz the pilots about the weather and pick the best slot. You can also meet some of your friendly committee! :-)
- Alternatively you can ring one of the people in the pub on their mobile and we'll give you the call in details for your chosen slot. The numbers of those in the pub will be put on the e-mail.
- The list will then go up in the Physics building as before, at around 1.55pm and you can sign up for slots on the list as per last year. It will remain up in physics until Friday at 1.15pm.
- If you call us at any time other than Thursday lunchtime, we'll put you on the list if there are spaces after it has come down from physics.

See the next page for a map of these seemingly random locations!

On the list there are four slots of which you may sign up for one. If there are still spaces in certain slots on Friday you may sign up for another space. On the signing up list you will find all the details of who you need to 'phone on the day of the flight and at what time. Ballooning requires calm conditions and for this reason we only fly in the morning and evening. Therefore 'phone in times will reflect this. Typically in October, 'phoning in times will be approximately 0730 and 1600. They do get later and earlier though as winter approaches, so it is vital you know who to call and at what time for the slot you have signed up for. Sign up is a little complicated if you're new to it, the simple way to do it is to come and see us in the pub on Thursday lunchtime and we'll sort you out.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happens if I can't get to the main University area to sign up?

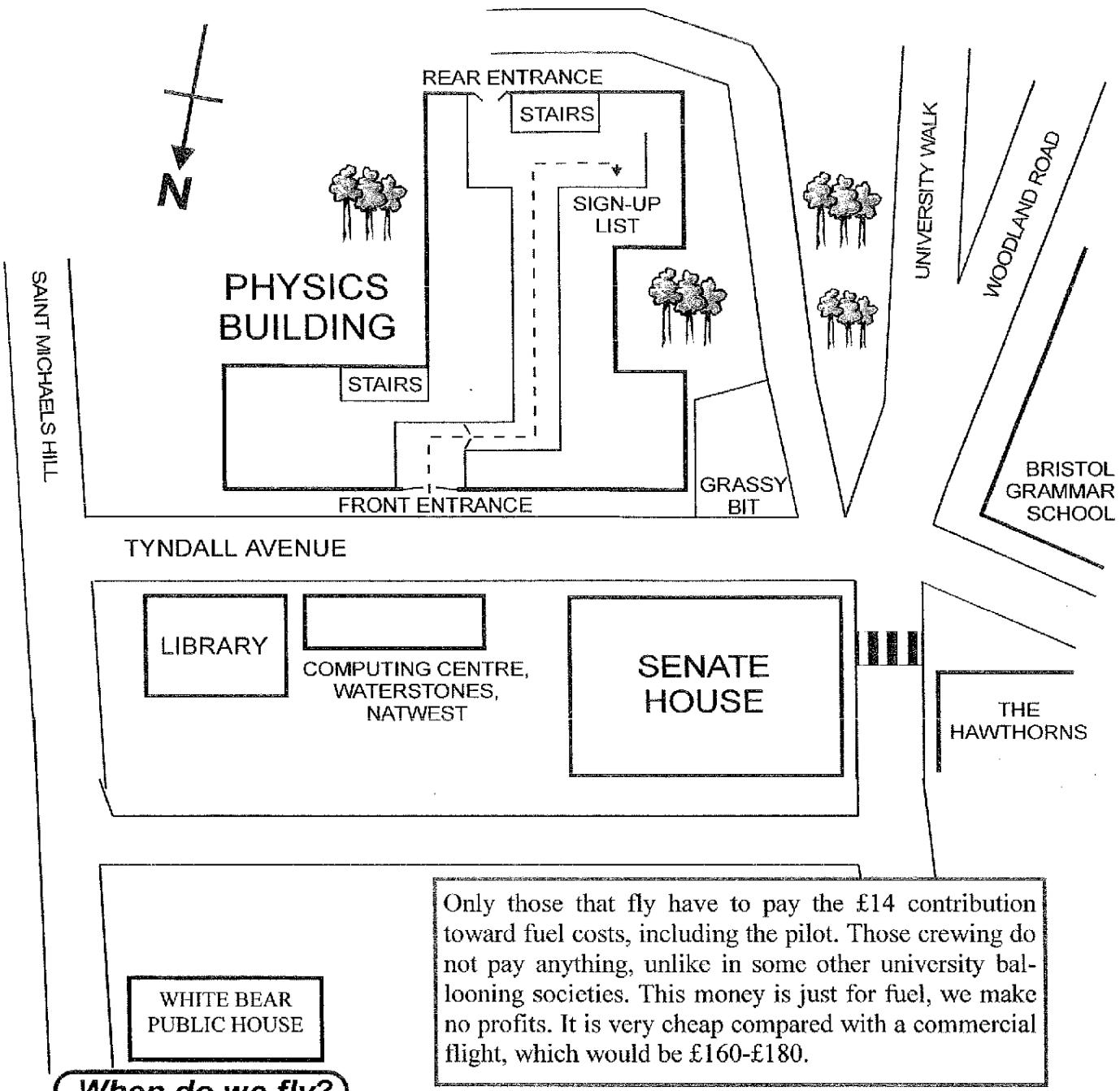
Every year a few members study/work away from the main University area of Tyndall Avenue. If this applies to you, then use the "ring us at the pub" method above is best. If it is impossible for you to use this method, then please talk to Hugo and we'll try and find a solution.

What Social things does the club do?

There is an active social life in the club. Some of our members are regular clubbers, so can not only advise you on ballooning, but also which clubs in town offer the saddest music. All social events are advertised in The Ripline and via e-mail. See page 2 for socials info.



Map of sign-up locations.



With over 120 members each year, we attempt to fly every slot available. Balloons fly early in the morning or late evening when the weather is calm. So our usual slots are; Saturday and Sunday, morning and evening. This does involve some early wake ups for morning slots and late returns for evening slots. As winter progresses, the 'phone in times become later in the morning and earlier in the evening. However, when summer approaches, be prepared to leave Bristol as early as 0500 for morning flights and return as late as 2200 on evening flights. We will be organising some trips during weekdays this year, e-mail will be used to advertise spaces. We cannot guarantee that you will be back in time for early lectures from a morning flight, so we leave it to your own discretion if you want to sign up.

Where do BUHABS fly?

We fly mainly in the Bristol/Bath and South Gloucestershire area. Balloons go exactly where the wind takes them, sometimes they even go over to Wales across the Bristol Channel. The van follows the balloon and arrives wherever the balloon lands to pick everyone up.



Why do I have to 'phone in no matter the weather?

You MUST 'phone in at the time you have signed up for on the notice board, EVEN if you think the weather is bad (who knows, the pilot may have other ideas!). Failure to call will result in a loss of two crewing points and may render you very unpopular if a flight has to be cancelled through lack of crew. Last year we had some slots where we left in the dark and rain but the sun was beaming through when we arrived at the launch field.

Safety

Were you aware that ballooning is the safest form of aviation, and that BUHABS has an excellent safety record? All BUHABS pilots are fully qualified, after rigorous training from some of the country's most experienced pilots. We only fly in good weather conditions and will not fly if conditions are 'marginal'; for this reason you might see other balloonists flying when BUHABS flights are cancelled. Passenger safety is our number one priority.

How many people go out on a trip?

The BUHABS retrieval van carries eight people and the balloon. Out of those eight, one is a pilot and the other a driver. On some trips we may also have the PUT (trainee pilot) along. The driver must be over 21 years of age, approved and insured on the van. If you are over 21 with a driving licence, you should get in touch with our Transport officer, Simon Church, if you would like to be a driver. There are various jobs to be done when launching the balloon, and once you have been out a few times you will have done them all. Two people hold open the mouth (base) of the balloon whilst cold air is blown in, after which the pilot will heat the air with a burner. Another two people are needed to pull on the crown line, a rope attached to the top of the balloon, in order to keep the balloon down until it is properly inflated. One person operates the inflation fan and others stand by to put their weight on the basket as the balloon comes upright. You can log your crewing activities in your logbook, and use it towards gaining a British Balloons and Airships Club Crew or Senior Crew qualification.

e-mail

Every student has access to e-mail. Most new students need to register with the Computing Service for this facility. Most Halls of Residence now have computer access terminals in each individual room. All are connected to the University network. You will be added to the BUHABS mailing list if you know your e-mail address at the beginning of term. Otherwise, to add yourself, simply send a message to majordomo@bris.ac.uk. All you need to say is 'Subscribe BUHABS', a message will be returned to you telling you about the mailing list. **Using e-mail will increase your chances of flying, especially when weekday flights may be advertised with only a few hours notice.**

How do I keep in touch with what is happening in BUHABS?

The Ripline newsletter. This newsletter is the first of many that will be sent to you in the post, informing you of happenings in BUHABS. Every month Ripline will bring you news of upcoming social events, reviews of past flights and hopefully a few laughs. It will not provide you with an accurate political comment on current affairs. You will also receive e-mails informing you of up-coming events. Also, check out our regularly updated website at www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Union/BUHABS.

What if I want to fly my boyfriend/girlfriend/parent/pet Godzilla?

The basic answer is that you will not be able to. We have a commitment to our members to get them flown ASAP. Flying non-members would make this task more difficult for us. However, the situation may change during holidays - sometimes with many students away spaces become available. Please don't pester pilots with such requests until we tell you it's okay. If you know someone who is keen to get airborne, they should join BUHABS. You should never sign anyone up on the notice board who is not a current member, -checks are made.



Jeepers, what if I am the only new member there, I will look such a Wally"

.....or words to that effect. Be reassured that there are usually a number of new members on most flights. Nobody expects you to be perfect at crewing, as the outing progresses you will learn about all the jobs that need to be done.

THE BALLOONING CHECKLIST - a quick guide



On Thursday lunchtime, visit the White Bear Pub, or call one of the committee in the pub to sign up for a slot. Phone numbers are sent by e-mail by Thursday morning. Or you can sign up at the Physics Notice board after 1:55 pm on Thursday. The list is removed at 1:15 pm on Friday.



Sign your name in your preferred slot. Only one slot is allowed per person, but you may sign again on Friday if slots remain unfilled. If you sign up another club member other than yourself, YOU will be penalised if they fail to 'phone in, so beware! Please do not sign in the driver's slot if you are new to the club or are not an approved driver, the approved drivers know who they are.



Take a note of the EXACT day and time of the pilot you have to call along with the 'phone number of the pilot.



When the day of the flight arrives, give the pilot a bell at the exact time noted. The 'phone may be engaged while others call in, be persistent or use BT's very useful ring-back facility. It is vital you call in, even if the weather is appalling, you will lose two crewing points if you fail to call. Continual failure to call will result in so many negative crewing points you may never get to fly.



Ballooning is totally weather dependent. Be prepared to be disappointed, you may have to try a few times before you actually get to go out. If the decision is to go, you will need to meet at the Union building at the time stated by the pilot (usually 30 - 60 minutes after the 'phone in). Pick ups can be arranged if you live a long way from the Union, from Stoke Bishop Halls for example.



You need to bring the following;

£14 in cash or cheque form, your BUHABS logbook, Suitable clothing (long sleeved jumper/sweater), Suitable footwear for retrieving in muddy West Country fields, Money for Breakfast/Drinks on the way home, An optional bottle of Bubbly to celebrate after!



The trip will go to a launch site chosen by the pilot. The entire outing will take 4-5 hours, and you will later be dropped off from where you were picked up.



You will gain one crewing point if you 'retrieve' (stay on the ground and help) and lose one point if you fly. This way everyone gets to fly on **at least 50%** of their trips, as selection is done on points. In cases where everyone is on equal points Dr. Spellward's patented 'Shortest Blade of Grass' draw takes place on the launch field.

Continued from Page 2

Afterwards we descended, again quite steeply, for an approach into a sloping grass field. On climb out, a simulated emergency – approach straight away into the next field. Hand on the ripline I brought us to a shallow descent and then, when Crispin was satisfied, we flew on. I had been happy so far because I knew I had done everything right. It was now the time to choose a final landing place. We skimmed the edge of Colerne zone and across Marshfield, then descended to an open area of fields. After crossing a road and some phone lines we came over a hedge and into a stubble field. After starting the descent using the ripline we can down in the middle of the field - putting out the pilot lights just before touchdown. And yes it was a trademark hard landing! (Ballooning is supposed to be an adventure sport after all.)

The balloon was packed up and we awaited the retrieve who, as usual, were never far behind. More by luck than judgement the field was by a road. Finding the farmer was a little more tricky since the first person Tim spoke to owned all the fields in the area except the one we landed in and didn't know who did. (Weird?) However, further down the road we found the landowner and left her with a BUHABS mug.

All in all it had been a successful flight. So was that it? Not quite. The final task before getting a licence was to fly solo.

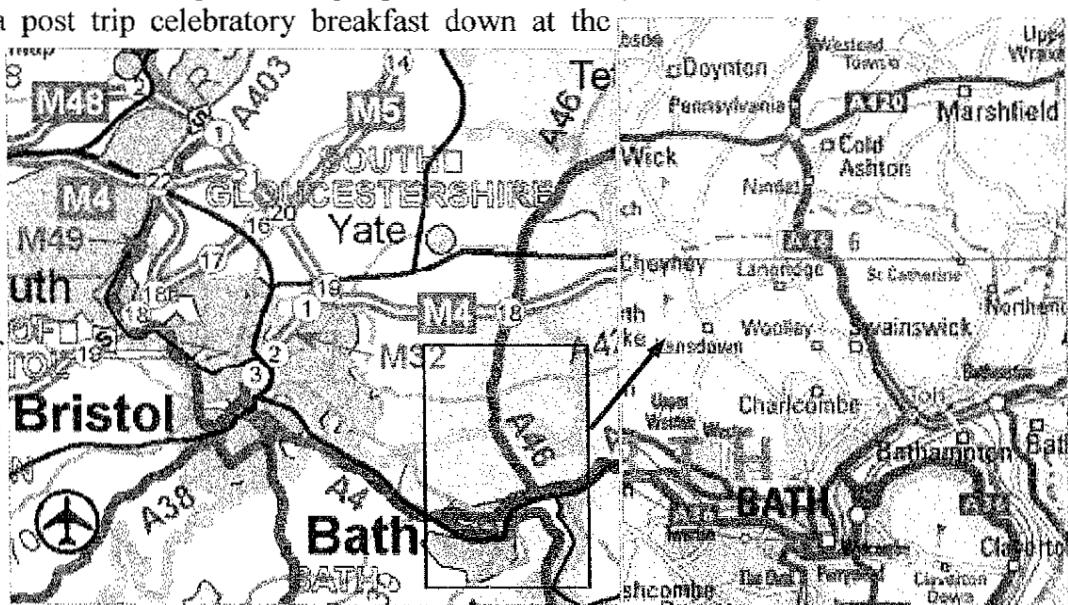
The weather was similar for the next morning, although the wind was forecast slightly more south easterly. Actually it was strange, because a balloon took off quite near to us that morning and flew in close to the ground in the opposite direction. Paul had been chosen to supervise my solo flight. The balloon was rigged as usual plus four extra fuel tanks to add weight. We fly a big balloon and it needs extra weight in it for just one person. (I found out later that all the other BUHABS pilots have borrowed small balloons to fly their solos in.) When Paul was ready in his balloon I checked all my kit for a final time and released. I shot up like a cork from a bottle because I had got the balloon quite hot (nerves?) and it was lightly loaded. I needed to fly for over 30 minutes and my plan was to go high and fly north between Bristol and Bath then to come down lower and find a landing site somewhere between.

In the end I flew up to 4500 feet to find the right wind direction. I could see several balloons below heading more westerly and a number of them flew across Bristol and on to Wales. After 25 minutes or so I began my descent over Yate and duly swung around to the left as I came near the ground. I flew low across some nasty looking power lines, prompting Paul to call me on the radio, and chose a final landing in a grass field just by Tytherington. This time it was a nice and gentle landing and the basket stayed upright. I even managed to pack away the envelope alone. All in all the flight had taken 35 minutes, which is a long time to come that distance. The retrieve crew arrived and saw the farmer and then spent a while looking for the right gates but eventually found the way in.

We enjoyed a post trip celebratory breakfast down at the buttery by the docks.

I expect to receive my pilots licence through the post in a couple of weeks time and look forward to flying for BUHABS in the skies over Bristol. With a bit of practice I should be able to soften those landings...

Simon





Vermenton 2002

Vermenton, a village in central France, is the venue for the annual BUHABS summer expedition in July. This year the intrepid BUHABS team of Tim Dudman, Rachel Harrington, Simon Jenkins, Sue Hunt, Nicola Hetherington, Ellie Fearon and myself battled a torrential downpour and van reliability problems to go flying in France. The first 3 days of our trip were best described as a washout! A torrential downpour grounded us and we sat, very wet, in the team tent munching pasta! The weather soon improved however and we started



flying, with a beautiful evening flight over a large forest, a union jack proudly attached to the crown line! By the middle of the week we were flying morning and evening back to back. Flying in France is very different to flying in the UK, with access to fields generally much easier. In all BUHABS flew 9 times during the week, one of the most memorable was on the morning we left. In very light and variable winds, Tim and Ellie flew Rachel and I across Vermenton, in an hour we flew barely two miles across the campsite, the river and the village centre. At one point it looked like we were shaping up nicely for a final approach into the car park of the supermarket! Then the wind gently swung us up onto a ridge behind the village and we touched down gently in another cut crop field. Most convenient landing award goes to Simon, who landed within 10 yards of a farmers track, a nice easy retrieve for Rachel and I! We all had a brilliant time, and it allowed Simon to get some final training in before his successful checkride. Ellie also managed to get some initial training flights and we all had some lovely flying.

Hugo (photos Simon J and Rachel)



BUHABS Committee Members.

The committee are elected at the AGM to run the club. Please try to direct queries to a relevant person, c-mail should be the usual form of communication, in exceptional circumstances phone calls are welcome, for example if you are ill the night before you're due to fly.

PRESIDENT

Hugo Williams

SECRETARY & P.U.T.

Ellie Fearon

TREASURER

Nicola Hetherington

TRANSPORT OFFICER

Simon Church

SENIOR PILOT/

Paul Spellward

FLYING TREASURER

Phil Hooper

WEBSITE EDITOR

Lee Hooper

PILOTS

Tim Dudman

Simon Jenkins

